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Mental health conference to be held March 30

Published: Wednesday, March 16th 2016, 5:28 pm CDT

Updated: Friday, March 18th 2016, 11:39 am CDT

By Mark Wilder, Digital Content Manager [CONNECT](#)

MONTGOMERY, AL (WSFA) - A Mental Health Conference, Hidden in Plain View: The Human and Economic Costs of Mental Illness, will be held on March 30 at the Renaissance Hotel and Conference Center in Montgomery.

This one-day conference will provide information about how mental illness impacts our families, our businesses and our communities. The keynote speaker is former U.S. Representative Patrick J. Kennedy. A pioneer in mental health policy and advocacy, Patrick served Rhode Island's First Congressional District for 16 years, championing causes essential to the well-being of all Americans. During his time on Capitol Hill, he was author and chief sponsor of the Mental Health Parity and Addiction Equity Act, groundbreaking legislation that guaranteed, for the first time in history, equal access to mental health and addiction services. He will address the key issues that are in the Parity law, including his plan for how to fix the mental healthcare system.

Kennedy, who has suffered with bi-polar disorder in the past, has become a national spokesperson for mental healthcare access and works to remove the stigma, which is a major barrier to care.

This conference can be another important catalyst for further action and education about mental illness, not only in the River Region, but throughout Alabama. Other speakers include James (Jim) Perdue, Commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health and Leon Evans, CEO, San Antonio Center for Healthcare Services.

CEUs: This conference has been approved for 5.8 hours for Nursing and 4.8 hours for General and Social Work.

NewSouth Books will have a representative on site at the conference if you would like to purchase a copy of Patrick Kennedy's book "A Common Struggle: A Personal Journey Through the Past and Future of Mental Illness and Addiction."

Keynote Speaker : Rep. Patrick J. Kennedy

Former U.S. Representative

Rep. Kennedy is also the founder of The Kennedy Forum on Community Mental Health. The Forum's mission is to unite the nation's health care system and rally the mental health community around a common set of principles: fully implement the 2008 parity law, bring business leaders and government agencies together to eliminate issues of stigma, work with providers to guarantee equal access to care, ensure that policymakers have the tools they need to craft better policy, and give consumers a way to understand their rights.

Leon Evans

The Center for Health Care Services President and CEO

Evans has developed a number of nationally recognized initiatives including the Bexar County Jail Diversion Program; the 24/7 Crisis Care Center; Crisis Intervention Training for public safety officers; and The Restoration Center, an integrated clinic providing psychiatric care, substance abuse services, transitional housing and general health care services for the homeless population. Each year, these programs save thousands of lives and result in millions of dollars in cost savings for the community.

James V. Perdue

Alabama Department of Mental Health

James V. Perdue was appointed commissioner of the Alabama Department of Mental Health on July 1, 2015. Prior to his appointment as commissioner, he served as the Probate Judge for Crenshaw County for 12 years. He also served as President of South Central Alabama Mental Health Board and as a member of the Alabama Mental Health Advisory Board of Trustees. Upon his appointment Governor Bentley said "We have made significant progress in the treatment for those who have mental illness, intellectual disability and substance abuse disorders in Alabama. Jim Perdue will continue to promote these efforts and work with department staff to support families and consumers of mental health services."

Registration Fee Registration and agenda: www.riverregionhealthymindsnetwork.org \$129.00 (maximum capacity is 400 registrants)

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